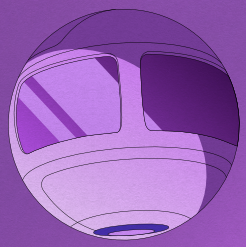
cyera

Case Study

From 635 Days to Six Weeks: How Lanes Group Cleared 183 Million Data Risks in the Cloud



How the UK's largest wastewater maintenance provider replaced the lost security "moat" of a cloud-first estate with automated visibility, and cleared years of hidden risk in a matter of weeks.

183M	99.5%	27 TB	<15 min
Records surfaced as at risk	Remediated within six weeks	Microsoft 365 data scanned	To deploy and connect to Azure

"You have risks with your data right now. But you're not aware of them. You can't see them. You can't visualize them, which means you can't control them." - Mo Dawood, CIO of Lanes Group

Lanes Group is the largest wastewater maintenance provider in the UK. When a pipe leaks or a network fails, it is usually one of the company's 4,500-plus engineers who turns up to fix it, anywhere from Aberdeen in the north to Redruth in Cornwall. As Mo Dawood, CIO of Lanes Group, describes his remit, every piece of technology in the business sits with his team: infrastructure, systems, data, security, and AI.

Lanes Group is cloud-first and a Microsoft house. Everything runs in Azure, with SaaS applications to dispatch and manage work end-to-end, and no on-premises infrastructure at all. That strategy took away a lot of headaches. It also took away something Mo valued: the wall around the data.

Company Profile: Lanes Group

About: The UK's largest wastewater maintenance provider and a leading utilities and infrastructure services company. Founded in 1992 in Leeds, Lanes Group supports water and wastewater, construction, energy, transportation, and gas operations across the UK and Ireland.

Industry: Utilities, wastewater, drainage, and infrastructure services

Headquarters: Leeds, West Yorkshire, UK

Workforce: 4,500+ engineers, with approximately 80% working in the field

Footprint: 30+ locations across the UK and Ireland

Data estate: 27 TB across Microsoft 365, supported by a cloud-first Azure environment with no on-premises infrastructure

Products used: Cyera DSPM, including AI-driven data classification, risk prioritization, and remediation

The Day the Moat Disappeared

In a cloud-first world, the old perimeter is gone. About 80% of the Lanes Group workforce is field-based, working from a site, a van, or a coffee shop, and focused on operational tasks rather than technology. “We can’t be watching people 24/7,” Mo says. Everything runs through a browser, which means the company cannot simply block an application as it once could, and it cannot always see when someone exports customer data, downloads a copy to a local drive, or moves it to OneDrive.

> “Everything was internal, you could lock that down and nothing could leave the building. We haven’t got that luxury anymore.”

Data That Multiplies as You Grow

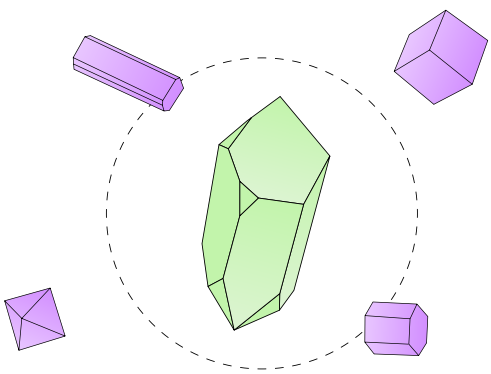
Lanes Group has grown rapidly, from around 300 staff in 2020 to more than 4,500 today, largely through winning contracts and transferring staff under TUPE. Every transfer brings employment files, training certificates, passports, and other personal data, often copied into more than one place. On top of that, the company receives large volumes of personal data for the sites it visits, including homeowner contact details and, where relevant, details of vulnerable people at a property. “We need it for a purpose, and we need to use it for that purpose,” Mo says, “but then we need to make sure it’s securely disposed of.”

Lanes Group already had processes for this. Data would be used for its window, then deleted, with manual audits to confirm. The problem was scale. “We didn’t have the resources to go and manually audit regularly enough,” Mo says. “Quite simply, we can’t scale that. And I don’t think anyone can in a modern world.” Without automation, a risk stayed invisible unless something went wrong.

Deployed in Minutes, Visibility in Hours

What sold Mo was speed, with no friction. He had rejected agent-based tools before due to the performance impact on servers and end-user devices. Cyera needed none of that. “We wanted something that was really lightweight, something that wasn’t intrusive,” he says, and Cyera “is able to deploy with no impact to anyone.” A native integration connects to the Azure Graph API with minimal configuration. In a proof of value, it took less than 15 minutes to connect. “I’ve never deployed anything as fast as we have with Cyera,” Mo says.

Visibility followed almost as quickly. “Within 28 to 48 hours, we were able to get visibility of the environment, see our most critical risks and start putting together a plan to do something about them,” Mo says. Cyera surfaced issues ranked by criticality, so the team could take the top risks first and work down, and remediation was built in. Instead of spotting a problem and then logging a ticket with the help desk, Mo’s team could act on it there and then.



183 Million Risks, 99.5% Cleared in Six Weeks

The first scan set the tone. “When we deployed Cyera, we had 27 TB within Microsoft 365 environments,” Mo says. “We had 183 million records at risk, and we remediated 99.5% of them within six weeks.” Doing that by hand was not realistic. “That would have taken us 635 days to remediate,” Mo says. With Cyera, “we were able to remediate that within six weeks.”

The bigger surprise was how much had been hiding in plain sight. “When we got the results back, we thought we were safe. We thought we had the right processes and policies in place and we thought we had control,” Mo says. “We were very surprised by the volume of risks that were surfaced by the tool, by Cyera.” The findings were the kind of exposure a fast-growing cloud estate accumulates without anyone noticing: forgotten data stores still being paid for, and former employees who, after their accounts were disabled, still had a quiet path to sensitive files through a personal account. What reassured him was the fix. “What surprised us the most was how easy it was to remediate.”

An Enabler, Not a Blocker

Lanes Group has seen huge adoption of Microsoft Teams and SharePoint, exactly the kind of collaboration it wants to encourage. The risk is that owners spin up their own sites and share files without central visibility into what's inside. Cyera surfaced exactly what data lived in those Teams and SharePoint sites and the risks to manage, allowing the team to step in only where it mattered. “We don’t want to be a blocker,” Mo says. “We want to be an enabler to success.”

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Two things made that practical. First, AI-driven scanning removed the manual work of classification. “You haven’t got to go in and classify your data manually,” Mo says. Cyera interprets the data and applies the right tags, and the team even trained it on industry-specific references, so a manhole reference unique to their world is recognized across the dataset just like a credit card number would be. Second, the work paid for itself. Clearing ghost data stores, now chargeable under Microsoft’s licensing changes, reduced the Microsoft license bill and freed budget for innovation. In Mo’s words, it “supported the business case for new innovation because we were showing value back into the business.”

Securing the Foundations for AI

Lanes Group has real ambitions for AI and digital transformation, and Mo is clear about the order of operations. “We need to secure our data first. We need to cleanse the data,” he says, and make sure people have the right access before going further. Cyera surfaces where permissions and exposure are wrong so the team can fix them first. His advice to peers is to prove it in their own environment. “You will have risks that you don’t know about today,” he says, and only proof of value in your own data will show the true benefit. His verdict is unequivocal: “I would have absolutely no hesitation in recommending Cyera to anyone in the industry.”

> “If I were ever to look for a new role, I can guarantee I take Cyera with me.”
> - Mo Dawood, CIO, Lanes Group

By the Numbers

Metric	Detail
Data scanned	27 TB across the Microsoft 365 environment
Records at risk	183 million surfaced on the first scan
Remediation	99.5% of at-risk records remediated within six weeks
Manual equivalent	About 635 days of manual remediation, completed in six weeks
Deployment	Connected to Azure in under 15 minutes. Critical risks and a plan within 28 to 48 hours
Environment	Cloud-first, all Microsoft Azure, with no on-premises infrastructure
Workforce	More than 4,500 engineers, about 80% field based, across the UK
Cost	Cleared chargeable ghost data stores, reducing Microsoft licensing spend and freeing budget for innovation
Classification	AI-driven, including custom industry tags such as manhole references

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